

# THE AMERICAN NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 11, VOL. XXVII.]

NOVEMBER, 1853.

[WHOLE No. 323.]

## SERMON DCVII.

BY REV. R. DAVIDSON, D.D.,

NEW-BRUNSWICK, N. J.

### THE JOY OF SALVATION.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit: then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."—PSALMS li. 10-13.

THE history of David is very instructive. Great was his sin, and great was his punishment. He was made to suffer in his person and family, as well as in his own soul. His heart was wrung by family feuds and contentions, the consequences of his transgression. His son Amnon atrociously insulted his sister Tamar, and her brother Absalom fearfully avenged the crime: Absalom, in turn, having become a successful rebel, and having expelled his father from the capital, at the instigation of Ahitophel, irreparably widened the breach between them, by violating the sanctity of the royal harem before the people and before the sun, pitching his tent on the very spot where David had first nursed his unhappy passion.

And if we inquire why David's old and honored counsellor should be the first to abet the rebellion of the son, we may trace his motives back to the outraged feelings of family pride. Bathsheba was the grand-daughter of Ahitophel.

Among the thirty-seven officers of the royal life-guards, we find the name of Eliam, the son of Ahitophel the Gilonite, and beside it, that of Uriah the Hittite, who had for his wife, Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam. No wonder, then, that Absalom knew what he was about, when he sent to Ahitophel to strengthen, by his name and influence, the conspiracy against the wretched king.

While David, on one hand, had alienated the wise old counsellor, on the other he had put himself completely in the power of his general, and was obliged tamely to submit to Joab's arrogance, as well as his direct disobedience in not sparing the young man, Absalom. So did not David yield when Joab assassinated Abner. Then he compelled Joab himself to put on sackcloth, and join in the funeral procession after Abner's bier. But now he submits to his servant's insolence, and passively complies with his directions. He had made Joab his confidant and accomplice in the matter of Uriah, and he never was his own man afterwards.

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave,  
When first we practice to deceive!"

But if David smarted in his person and his family, he was made to suffer yet more severely in his own soul. Of the bitterness of his remorseful feelings, the fifty-first Psalm is a faithful record. What depths of self-abasement, what tender regrets, what penitential sorrow it breathes! He represents himself as incessantly haunted by the gaunt spectre of his guilt, without repose, night and day. "My sin is ever before me." Raised above the reach of the law by his regal station, he the more freely bewailed his vileness in the sight of his heavenly Judge. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Ardently he longs for the purifying hyssop, and envies the whiteness of the snow. Nathan had told him, "by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme;" and, conscious of the reproach he had brought upon religion, he desires reinstatement in the divine favor, that he may, as far as possible, repair the great wrong he had done, and once more resume those active duties which his torpid conscience had so long intermitted. Therefore he prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

It is evident that David's chagrin for the shame and scandal his conduct had cast upon religion, was at least as keen as his personal mortification; and this is still further evinced by his fervent desire, in the close of the psalm, that God would do good, in his good pleasure, unto Zion, and build the walls of Jerusalem.

The sentiment to which the psalmist was led to give utterance, is weighty, and deserves to be pondered. It is a truth which the professed people of God, in every age, should seriously lay to heart. *A clean conscience, and a lively enjoyment of religion, are necessary to extensive usefulness and influence in the cause of God, and in winning souls to Him.*

This will appear from three reasons, embracing the elements on which a successful result depends—*Experience, Confidence, and Joy.*

I. *Only an experimental acquaintance with religion can qualify any one to speak of it to edification.*

A blind man has been known to lecture on colors; but a blind man could not teach the art of painting. In like manner. Religion is not a mere theory, but a practice also. Its vitality and excellence consist in action. It is a life and a power. Hence the apostle speaks of the power of godliness, and distinguishes between the power and the form. Without the former, the latter is but an empty shell. It is no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Notions picked up at second-hand must necessarily be crude, superficial, and inadequate. What a man learns by hearsay, he may, parrot-like, prate about, but his conceptions lack clearness and solidity. No description can give the same vivid idea of a thing as an actual acquaintance with it. Describe to any one the flavor of some tropical fruit which he has never seen, or some charming landscape which he has never visited; what distinct impression will be left on his mind? But, on the contrary, let him taste the fruit himself, and he has an accurate idea of its flavor at once. Let him see the landscape with his own eyes, and though he should have but a single glimpse, and his sight should be from that moment irreparably lost, yet that momentary glimpse has sufficed to reveal to him, and to daguerreotype ineffaceably upon his memory, glories and beauties which fancy never could have conjured up. Such is the infinite superiority of knowledge gained by experience over that obtained from the description of others. Doubtless it is in allusion to the clearness and distinctness of an experimental knowledge of religion, that the exhortation is addressed to us by the sacred writers, "O, *taste and see that the Lord is good!*" "Come and see!" "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

Acting upon this principle, the apostle Paul charged Timothy, when employed as an evangelist, and ordaining elders in every city, "the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." He was persuaded that an experimental knowledge of the trials and supports of the Christian life was necessary to furnish the pastor for his work, and enlarge his usefulness and efficiency among the children of sorrow. How could he who had never mourned enter into the feelings of the

mourner, or be qualified to administer either soothing sympathy or scriptural consolation? Therefore he used the language, "who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

Luther was of this opinion when he said that there are three things that make a divine—temptation, meditation, and prayer. He believed that none was competent to give saving advice to souls plunged in melancholy, agitated by stormy trials, and abandoned to despair, except one who had gone through deep waters himself, and who was familiar with like tempestuous emotions. Should a person, laboring under great anxiety and distress of mind on account of sin, and ignorant how to be rid of his burden, come to an inexperienced pastor, instead of directing him to the blessed Saviour and his atoning blood, he would very likely (as unhappily has been done) content himself with telling the distressed person to take medicine, or go into cheerful society, and try to get rid of his melancholy by diverting his mind from serious subjects. Such are the blind leaders of the blind; and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

People have a wonderful instinct and sagacity in determining who is likely to benefit them. As the Babylonians brought their sick to the market-place, and asked such of the passers-by as had had the same disease, to tell the remedy that cured them, so the conscience-stricken will turn away from the learned and profound preacher, who is deficient in a wide experience, to hang with breathless eagerness upon the lips of him who can say, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." Men want those that have suffered and sorrowed like themselves, to show the way of relief for their burdened hearts. Just so in a battle, it is the veteran, in a shipwreck it is the old mariner, to whom all eyes are turned with expectation, because they have been in such scenes before. They have not acquired their knowledge at second hand.

II. This leads us to notice another element of success—*Confidence*. *Without confidence we cannot undertake to guide others.*

A guide must have the confidence of those who follow him; and, in order to command it, he must have confidence in himself. Hesitation is most undesirable. Time is lost by pausing to study the path, or by retracing one's steps. Guessing and doubt awaken well-founded distrust and alarm. No wonder if men abandon such a guide for their own conjectures. They are at least no worse off.

But how can a man have satisfaction in his own mind, and confidence in his own judgment, when he is disturbed by doubts and fears? Fear is the natural concomitant of a guilty con-

science. A conscience ill at ease will transform the bravest into cowards. Why else did Adam and his consort hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Always before had they been glad to observe the tokens of his walking in the garden in the cool of the day, but then they were innocent. Now they skulked like guilty culprits, and sought concealment for their shame. David, after Joab's complicity in that dreadful affair before the walls of Rabbah, cowered before his general, and bore his rebukes without reply; nay, he was completely unmanned, even before that dead dog Shimei, "let him alone, and let him curse," said he, "for the Lord hath bidden him." Would you have another instance? See those two disciples, at early dawn, passing to the sepulchre to ascertain the resurrection of their Master. "So they ran both together, and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre." When before did Peter suffer John to outrun him? When before did he allow another to be first in any duty? Who would recognize in him the same Peter who was always foremost to speak, foremost to build tabernacles on the Mount, foremost to plunge into the sea, foremost to draw the sword, now lagging behind, his impetuosity checked, his ardor chilled? What a sad change! It is an effort to drag along his weary feet, for guilt, like a weight of lead, clogs them; the remembrance of the oath, and the denial, of the cock-crow, and the look of reproach, retards his steps.

Not otherwise was it with the Israelites at Hormah, and on various occasions before their Syrian enemies. "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up?" How differently they acted when, sustained by a righteous cause, and animated by a good conscience, they discomfited the armies of the aliens, and, under the Maccabees vindicated the independence of their country. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion." They that are conscious of being forsaken of the Lord shall be subject to the most dreadful panics, as was predicted, "Upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies, and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth," Lev. xxvi. 36.

It needs not that we look abroad, or summon from the infernal world, the Furies that shall lash the guilty conscience. "Every one that finds me shall slay me," said the first homicide, trembling with undissembled cowardice. "My sin is ever before me," exclaimed David, with sack cloth on his loins. Before Belshazzar understood what the handwriting meant, as soon as he saw the flaming letters on the wall, "his countenance changed, and his knees smote together." Ahab exclaimed in undisguised agitation, when he met Elijah in the way, "hast



thou found me, oh, mine enemy?" Who told him that Elijah was in search of him, or that he was his enemy? So also Herod's first thought, when he heard of Christ's miracles, was, that "John the Baptist, whom he had beheaded, was risen from the dead." Thus doth every culprit, like Pashur, who insulted the Lord's prophet, become a Magor-missibib, a terror to himself. "Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet. His strength shall be hunger-bitten, and destruction shall be ready at his side," Job xviii. 11, 12. "A dreadful sound is in his ears," Job xv. 21. "The first-born of Death shall devour his strength. His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of Terrors. They that come after him shall be astonished at his day; as they that went before were affrighted," Job xviii. 13, 14, 20.

"Tis not the babbling of a busy world,  
Where praise and censure are at random hurled,  
Which can the meanest of my thoughts control,  
Or shake one settled purpose of my soul.  
Free and at large might their wild curses roam,  
If all, if all, alas! were well at home.  
No! 'tis the tale which angry Conscience tells,  
When she, with more than tragic horror, swells  
Each circumstance of guilt; when stern, but true,  
She brings bad actions forth into review,  
And like the dread hand-writing on the wall,  
Bids late remorse awake at reason's call:  
Arm'd at all points, bids scorpion vengeance pass,  
And to the mind holds up reflection's glass;  
The mind which, starting, heaves the heartfelt groan,  
And hates that form she knows to be her own."

Wretched, most wretched is the condition of the sinner laboring under poignant convictions. If his guilt has been detected and exposed to the world, the consciousness of that exposure, and the dread of scorn's slow moving finger, weigh him down. And even if he feels secure against detection, he knows that God is privy to it, and has "set all his sins before him, his secret sins in the light of his countenance." How cutting his self-upbraidings! how prompt his remorse! how bitter his loathing of himself! No position seems too humble for him to take, no penance too heavy to undergo. He drowns his pillow in hot tears; he rises at midnight from a sleepless couch, and flings himself upon his knees at his bedside, praying in the anguish of his soul for mercy—that mercy that was extended to the publican—and longing for the peace of God to cool and soothe his distracted bosom. His soul is a desolate waste, whose bleakness no verdure refreshes. His proud heart is nigh to bursting, and a fever parches his veins. And then comes a disconsolate wringing of the hands, and a compressure of the quivering lip,

and a shrinking from the pleasant light of day. The curse seems to rest upon him. It has an unearthly amplitude. It fills the bounds of space. It is palpable and embodied, as though he could clutch it in his convulsive grasp. It weighs him down, and sits upon him like a mountain of lead. He cries in his agony, "Reprobate that I am! the fire of God's wrath is already enkindled within my bosom. Jesus of Nazareth, torment me not before my time!" Would we could admit this to be nothing but a fancy sketch, a fiction without a counterpart in reality! But it is itself the dread reality. And to such a fearful height does this uneasiness sometimes rise, that the unhappy victim of unappeased remorse is willing to seek relief in the grave, and courts the aid of the tube, the cord, or the wave, in order to terminate his agonizing suspense.

"And know the worst his fears foreshow."

Can such a one, destitute of all satisfaction in his own soul; an utter stranger to the peace of God which passeth understanding; devoid of confidence in God, in himself, in the truth and efficacy of religion; can such a one invite sinners to Zion, or teach transgressors the ways of God? He may be a beacon to warn, but never a clarion to rouse to victory. No! a clean heart and a clear conscience must he have who takes the awful name of God upon his lips, or would act as interpreter and guide to the conscience-stricken and sin-laden. "Unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?"

III. We are now prepared to advance to a third proposition, as before indicated. In order to win souls to God, *it is desirable that we have a lively enjoyment of religion.*

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit! Then," adds the psalmist, "then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and," through my zeal and fidelity, "sinners shall be converted unto thee." The connection between these two things, the condition and the result, could not be more plainly pointed out.

Enthusiasm begets enthusiasm. All the sympathies of our nature respond in unison with it. The indifferent will not be listened to. He who would make others feel, must feel himself. He who would unlock the fount of tears, must be the first to weep. He that would enkindle and carry away his auditors, must have his own soul on fire. We cannot expect others to be interested where we feel no interest ourselves.

A certain person of influence once procured the pardon of a culprit who lay under sentence of death. As soon as the poor man regained his liberty, he sought out his benefactor, and relieved his full heart of the torrent of his gratitude. "Every drop

of my blood," said he, "thanks you; I would follow you on my knees over the world."

Similar should be our feelings towards the Lord Jesus, with this difference, that our feelings should be elicited with still greater warmth, inasmuch as he not merely interceded for our release, but actually laid down his head for our head, his life for our life. He gave up a throne for the cross, a crown of glory for a crown of thorns, the sceptre of empire for a reed of mockery, the robe of judgment for a soldier's rags. He gave his back to the smiters, and withheld not his cheek from being buffeted and spit upon. For our reproaches was he reproached, and for our bondage was he bound.

If Jesus consented to such sacrifices for us, shall we hesitate at any for him? If he thus devoted himself for us without reserve, shall we set cautious bounds to our devotion to him? If he died for us, is it too much to expect that we live unto him?

To appreciate the joy of salvation, we must know what it is to be lost. *To be lost!* What numerous sad images rise up before the mind at that fearful word;—the ship lost at sea;—the traveller lost in a wild land infested by savages;—the wanderer lost among the icy clefts of the Alps;—the military leader knowing that all his fortunes will be lost with a single decisive battle;—the tender mother frantic over the cold remains of a lost darling;—an unfortunate man lost in the vast cataract in spite of every attempt to save him;—all these call up emotions of a pensive character;—but what are all such losses to the loss of the soul! A soul is wrecked amid the tempests of life, and thenceforth drifts a hapless, helpless, hopeless wanderer over the dark ocean of eternity, without a star, without a helm, without a haven. A poor lost soul! What volumes of meaning, what unsounded depths of tenderness are there in that word! Go to the hill of Calvary, and count every groan, and every drop of blood that fall from the angust sufferer, and from the price paid for the soul's redemption learn the greatness of its loss. Look down into the pit of hell, and from the shrieks and screams that issue through its grated doors, learn the same vivid lesson. The inmates of that drear abode have new light shed upon the meaning of the word "*Lost!*" On earth they thought they knew it, now they *feel* it! Lost to holiness, lost to happiness, lost to hope, lost to heaven, such is the condition of the children of disobedience. Could you hear one of those miserable souls wailing out the curse of its eternity, the word "lost" would have henceforth a new meaning for you. The sound would haunt you forever. To this loss are we all exposed, this ruin impends over every one of us. Not all feel it. Some laugh at it. They coldly call it enthusiasm. But there are others who have felt the sting of conscience, and moaned over the anticipated curse. Every pang of remorse has seemed like a sparkle from the foam of the lake that burneth, setting their souls on fire. They know what David felt when he



said, "the terrors of hell gat hold upon me." "While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted."

And they know too what it is to find the burden gone; to be able to lift up their eyes once more to the blue sky, and see there a reconciled Father's smile; to have Christ in them the hope of glory, to think of death without alarm, and of the judgment-day without trembling. He who led captivity captive has restored the poor estray, and whispered in the ear hope sweet as angel music, "The Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost."

The joy of salvation! None know that joy but they who are saved. Those that were on the very verge of perishing, and were snatched from the jaws of death may speak of it. The lost sailor, the lost wayfarer, the lost battle, the lost babe, the lost swimmer;—imagine in each case, a wonderful and happy reverse. What shouts of joy, what songs of praise, what vows of gratitude celebrate the deliverance!

They that have tasted the joy of salvation are privileged to recommend it to others. They know something of its sweetness. They have felt the magic of its power. They are satisfied that it is a blessed reality. They feel that it is no morbid fancy, no idle dream. Full of the glow of enthusiasm, they accost every one they meet, "Come with us, and we will do you good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

Unless religion be in a lively state in our souls, and we in some degree enjoy its power, we will feel little inducement to recommend it to others. But on the contrary, if we have a lively enjoyment of religion, we will long to make every one a partaker of our joy. The heaven will work. It is not the nature of Christianity to sit still at home, when there is work to be done for God and for souls. Then, when the heart is in a right and a happy frame, then will zeal boil, and the tongue grow pliant. Then will they that love the Lord speak often one to another. They will pray and labor, and teach transgressors their ways, and sinners shall be converted to God.

This subject gives birth to several practical reflections.

1. How desirable and precious the joy of salvation! How enviable, beyond wealth and state, a lively enjoyment of religion in the heart! Thrice happy the soul which holds communion with Jesus, which has the freedom of the city of God, and feeds on the heavenly manna!

2. If we find torpor and inactivity benumbing us in the service of God, it is not difficult to conjecture the cause. "Sin lieth at the door." Want of interest arises from the incrustation of sin; coldness and remissness, and backsliding and love of the world are at the bottom of it all.

3. The way of return is equally obvious. Retrace your steps. Begin at the beginning. Relay the foundation. Do your first

works over again. Do not rely on old experience, but replenish the lamp with fresh oil.

4. We may infer that ordinarily a deep experience is necessary to great usefulness. Paul was such an instance. He was arrested in the midst of his persecution and rancor, and "obtained mercy, that in him first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." John Newton was another example. Who viler than he? once engaged in the accursed traffic in slaves on the coast of Africa, himself a slave to every lust. Yet was he brought to repentance, and extensive usefulness. Nowhere do we find more edifying hymns illustrative of Christian experience than his. John Bunyan was another instance of distinguishing grace. The blaspheming, cursing, swearing tinker, to hear whose profanity made the blood of every pious hearer run cold, was brought to see the error of his ways. Sharp and severe were his inward conflicts, but once a pilgrim on the way to Zion, he so well delineated the pilgrim's progress, that the map serves as an itinerary still, and grows in popularity as it grows in age.

5. We see the secret under God, of revivals of religion. When religion is in a lively state in the heart, it is easy to talk about it. The heart is engaged. The preacher has a limited part to perform. He cannot do everything. The Church has something to do. You should bring your friends, your relatives, your acquaintances, your neighbors, the community, the world itself, in the arms of your faith, and lay them at the feet of Jesus; and ask earnestly for a blessing upon them. Seek to have your own souls engaged, that you may be the readier to do good to others. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come!" Such is the combination of agencies in the economy of grace. The Spirit is saying, Come! The Spirit is ready to do his part, but is the Bride doing hers? Is the Church saying, Come? Does he that heareth say, Come? Oh, ye officers of the Church, ye men and women whose names are on the roll as members of the Church, ye that profess to be followers of the Lamb, are you saying, Come? Are you saying to the unconverted, "Come with us and we will do you good!" Or are you by your example and conduct saying as plainly as if it were expressed in words, "Do not come; you will get no good; you will be as well off where you are?" Dreadful is the guilt of those who come not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Beware how you incur the curse of Meroz.

6. We are taught by our text to invoke the aid of the blessed Spirit. "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me! Uphold me with thy free Spirit!" Mindful of our dependence on divine aid, seek it continually. Dread going in your own strength. Lean on the arm of the Lord. The Spirit is a spirit of purity, of holiness, of peace, of love. The heavenly dove is easily grieved by the indulgence of sentiments and inclinations contrary to his nature, such as sensuality, worldliness, selfishness or anger. But he is

ever ready to dwell in the heart that welcomes him, and cherishes his influences. Pray then for his renewing, revivifying, enlightening, purifying and hallowing presence. Banish every idol from your heart, and devoutly consecrate yourself as a living temple unto the Lord, into which nothing unclean or profane shall be admitted. So shall the great objects of the Christian life be attained, so will you peace flow like a river—so will you lead on earth the life of angels—so will you be honored in turning many to righteousness, and when life's last duties shall be over, sweetly will the benediction of God and the welcome of the glorified sound in your ears.

## SERMON DCVIII.

BY REV. EDWARD STRONG,

NEW HAVEN, CT.

### RELIGIOUS DECLENSION.

"My people are bent to backsliding from me."—HOSEA xi. 7.

How often, in the Scriptures, is this allegation brought against the people of God! In how varied forms, and under how varied imagery! Surely, we exclaim, the standard of Christian duty is elevated indeed; and its divine author, of purer eyes, than to behold iniquity or look upon sin but with abhorrence. And so it is. The standard of Christian duty is not what many suppose. Nor is God what many suppose. He is not so indifferent to the maintenance of his law; not so indifferent to seemingly trivial departures from it; not so content to overlook backsliding.

There is always, in these allegations, an indication of deep emotion. It is apparent that the infinite heart of God is wounded by the serpent-tooth of his children's ingratitude—is offended by their fickleness and treachery, and is altogether in earnest when charging their guilt upon them. This is enough to impart a solemn interest to our meditation upon the charge contained in the text.

How singular the moral condition of a believer bent on backsliding. It is not a mere vacillation between God and mammon, holiness and sin, but a steady leaning, an earnest leaning toward the latter. It is the very disposition with which Israel, in the transit from Egypt to Canaan, turned back, in their hearts, to the land of their bondage. It is the disposition with which they preferred the leeks and onions of slavery, to the self-denials that were necessary in crossing the wilderness to the promised land—with which they made their molten calf, went after Baal, sacrificed to Moloch, and variously forsook God their Saviour. Its perverseness is but too apparent.

I. We will inquire who among us must plead guilty to the charge that they are bent on backsliding?

II. *Contemplate their guilt.*

III. *Survey the consequences which timely repentance can alone avert.*

I. In the first place, by what marks may we identify those among us who may justly be considered as *bent on backsliding*?

1. The first mark is a *neglect of secret and family prayer*. I place these kinds of prayer together, because the neglect of one ordinarily follows neglect of the other. So fidelity in the one will ordinarily follow fidelity in the other. Neglect of prayer is, for the most part, at the beginning, middle and end of backsliding. It pervades the whole career of departure from God. The Christian never returns to God, nor God to him, till this neglect ceases. Ordinarily the closet is the first meeting place of the estranged parties. Visits of love and mercy, indwellings of the Holy Spirit are only vouchsafed to those whose earnest petitions indicate their appreciation of the value of these gifts.

Wherever, in the Church, you find an individual regarding his closet with disrelish, restraining prayer, often omitting it altogether, at other times content with a mere hurried performance of the externals of devotion, finding his thoughts even in the sacred place where "none but God is near," roving off to his employment—accustomed to resort thither, not from inward longing for communion with God, not from a conviction of moral weakness, and need of grace, but only to silence the demands of duty—happier to come forth than to enter there; happier, not because of an approving conscience and smiling Saviour, but because a task is over, and he may plunge again untrammelled into his wonted worldliness. Wherever you find an individual like this, you find one *bent on backsliding*; I might add, *one* who has already glided away to no inconsiderable distance from God. The eye of the Saviour looks deeper than our own, and that eye beholds the earnest bent of his mind. It sees his groveling disposition, his prayer-neglecting habit, and thus discerns *one* mark, and that a deep one, of his apostasy.

2. Another mark is *habitual neglect of the Bible*. Whoever walks closely with God takes delight in his word. He reads it often. He meditates upon it. He can say with the Psalmist, from his own blessed *experience*, "thy word is sweet to my taste." He is attracted to it as a medium of communion with God. He loves it because it contains those precious promises, which are like rivers of consolation and hope. He loves it for its purity. He loves it for those precepts, in obedience to which he finds a rich reward. Not so he who is bent on backsliding. He delights not in the Scriptures. He reads them accordingly, if at all, rather from a *conviction of duty*, than a felt satisfaction in thus communing with God. His soul is never bathed in them as in a pure fountain. He never fairly imbibes their celestial spirit, and so never derives from them a quickening power.

Fellow Christian! Is it so with you? Are you neglectful not only of private and domestic prayer, but also of the sacred word? Is it but seldom that you commune with its pages?



Then we may bring our appeal to your own consciousness. You can but confess that your affections do not centre as they should upon God. They are not identified as they should be with the Saviour's cause.

3. *Backwardness or reluctance in efforts to do good*, is another indication that a professing Christian is bent on backsliding. Have you then no deep impulse within, urging you to a degree of activity in religion, corresponding to what you exhibit in matters of worldly concern? Does a civil, political, or pecuniary enterprise, awaken an energy and zeal which you never evince for the Saviour's cause? If so, what does it indicate? If you are found rolling onward these enterprises, sympathising, speaking, acting, making your influence tell variously in their promotion, and yet when religion is the theme, and the Redeemer's glory the motive, you are mute, inactive, indifferent, what can be the only rational inference? I speak of any enterprise in which you feel a deep interest, one on which your heart is fixed, and I say that just as a reluctance to promote *that* enterprise, would argue little interest in it; so reluctance to promote religion by doing good, argues that you feel little interest in religion. If you never attempt to exert a positive influence for the Saviour, urging fellow Christians forward in duty, yourself leading the way, and inviting sinners to the place of worship, and to the Cross; if you do not *this*, even with the members of your own domestic circle, certainly you give evidence, both to God and man, either that you are not a Christian, or else are bent on backsliding.

4. Another mark by which to identify the class in question, is *the undervaluing of religious ordinances*. Lightly to esteem the house of God, its praises, prayers, instructions, hallowed associations, indicates a backsliding heart. If, for example, you lightly esteem the sacraments of baptism, and the Lord's Supper, deferring long the dedication of your children to God, approaching but seldom, or heartlessly, to take the sacred symbols of a crucified Saviour—if you enter the house of God, taking your place among his worshippers, you scarcely know why, unless it be from the influence of education, habit, and desire for the respect of Christian people. If you regard more forms and ceremonies, the pomp and parade of religion than its power—the shadow more than the substance—what inference can be drawn from this, except that either you are not a Christian or have become a backslider?

One who hungers and thirsts after righteousness cannot *do* thus—cannot *feel* thus. The hungry will not regard the shadow of food. They want the substance. The thirsty will not regard the bubbling of the stream. They must have the water. So will not a Christian, whose heart is true to the Saviour, fixed upon him, be content with the *forms* of religion. He must feel its power. He *must* actually taste its sweetness.

Other marks of a backsliding believer there are. But we can only name them. They are, however, not unworthy of your serious regard. *Censoriousness* is one. It grows out of a want of Christian charity, and a felt personal imperfection. High regard for *gayety* and *fashion* is another. Preference of vain amusements to those whose entire innocence no one will question, and of *frivolous* company to the society of the spiritually-minded, indicates also, in a Christian professor, a *heart bent* to backsliding from God.

II. *Secondly*, we are to consider the *guilt which this moral condition involves*. If the marks already adverted to, belong to any in this assembly, I beg them seriously to ponder what remains to be said; especially now the ever accumulating guilt of occupying so strange a position relative to God and religion.

1. Consider, in the first place, that every such professor is *acting the part of a hypocrite*. We do not charge him with the guilt of *wilful* hypocrisy, but with that of *practical* hypocrisy. It is a charge, Christian brethren, which I grieve to make. This, however, is of less consequence than the question against *whom among us* it may fairly lie. Against whom do God and an accusing conscience bear witness? Is it *I myself*? God forbid that I should wholly acquit myself while criminating—if so it prove—any of you.

Yet in all plainness, I must insist, that they who recognize in themselves the foregoing marks of backsliding, are acting a part of the hypocrite. What are those high professions made, hearer, before angels and men? If your life accord not with them,—if you endeavor not earnestly and always *to be* what you profess to be, and *to do* what you profess to do, the charge of hypocrisy must lie against you; the guilt of hypocrisy is at your door, nay, is actually upon your soul. So long as your disposition and manner of life are irreconcilable with the tenor of your religious vows, you are not what you profess; you are not what you would have others consider you; you have one kind of religion on your lips, and another in your *heart*. There are indeed vows of allegiance to God—protestations of friendship and discipleship to Christ, but nothing correspondent to these vows and protestations appears in your life. That life retracts them. It is eloquent of loyalty and love, not to the Saviour, but to the world. What shall this be termed if not *hypocrisy*? And if it *be* hypocrisy its guilt is enough apparent.

2. Again, the guilt of those who are obnoxious to the allegation of the text appears in this, that their influence goes *to depress the standard of piety* which the Saviour has fixed, to adulterate that system of truth and duty which he has given as the hope of the world. Christianity is a holy religion. Its aim is to bind the heart of man, by the magnetic energy of love, to Heaven. Its aim is to elevate thither all his aspirations. Its standard of duty

is high and sacred. Nor does it challenge the heart alone. For it aims to harmonize the external and the internal in man—to exhibit, both to celestial beings and to the world, the attractive beauty of a holy heart and a holy life; in other words, of renewed affections carried out in the Christian's life.

Now what we charge upon every Christian professor whose heart is bent to backsliding, is the guilt of adulterating this holy religion, and depressing, so far as his influence goes, its divine standard of duty. Born of heaven, Christianity comes to earth with heaven's own purity. It comes freighted with heaven's own fruition. What is it then we are doing when we put a base alloy into the gold of heaven? Intermingling principles of selfishness with those of a heaven-born beneficence? Better, far better, reject Christianity; better refuse its grace, than having embraced, to depress its standard of holiness. In the former case the rejector alone will perish; in the latter he may occasion the perdition of many.

The Creator loves indeed each individual soul, but he loves Christianity *better*, because it is a glorious scheme of salvation for *myriads*. What sentiments then must He cherish toward those who thus corrupt this fountain of health and life, destroying its beauty, and its adaptation to save?

Of course no Christian could *intend* to perpetrate so audacious a crime. The intention to work such mischief is not charged upon any one. But yet all this mischief is involved in the course pursued by every backslider. The life of a Christian *must* and *will* be taken as an exponent of what Christianity is—an interpreter of its divine principles and precepts. Often indeed do they prove false expounders of their boasted religion; but this will not prevent their expositions from being received. It will not prevent men of the world from imbibing thence their impressions of Christianity. Not at all. They may even know that these lives are little better than a libel on our holy religion, they will yet reason that if in outward deportment they fall not below the example of Christians, neither will they in respect to their destiny in the future life.

Yes, the backsliding Christian is an adulterator of Christianity. He does not give it to others, as the Bible does to *him*. He dishonors it. He brings it into disrepute. As far as his influence extends, at least for the time of his guilty wandering, he depresses it to the level of other systems of religion, tarnishing the glory of the Saviour by putting him into a catalogue of impostors. He adulterates the life-giving stream of mercy. Receiving it from God in its purity, and professing to exhibit to the world what it is, by his manner of life, he creates habitually a false impression. As he received Christ Jesus he does not walk in him. On the contrary, he begins soon to tamper with that which is forbidden, earnestly endeavoring to secure the coalescence in a monstrous union of Christianity and earthliness. Such is the

practical bearing of the backslider's daily life,—a bearing and a result which render his *guilt* but too apparent.

3. Another particular will shed additional light upon the point before us. The backslider, or what is practically the same thing, he who is *bent* to backsliding, *retards the progress of Christianity in the world*. He cuts the sinews of its strength. He takes off its chariot wheels. He encumbers it with enormous burdens, piling upon it mountains, while at the same time slipping the belt that connects it with omnipotent power. *Hear me*, backsliding Christian, for I fancy you know not what you do, while bent on such a course. You treat Christianity as Samson was treated by the perfidious Delilah. By you it is shorn of its strength, divested of its properties as a *divine* religion, and then divested of much of the energy it might, under other conditions, exert as a *human* system. In proportion as you give by your daily example a false impression of what true piety is, you veil the essential glory of Christianity. The Saviour intended that the beauty of godliness should appear in your lives. This he expressly enjoined. Clearly then if you veil this beauty you are guilty in no ordinary degree—guilty of downright disobedience, and of the essential and felt obligation to exhibit to others the attractiveness of the gospel. Thus you hinder it. Its blessings will come to fewer households; will gladden fewer hearts, and gladden immeasurably less even those who embrace it, because through your example they will ordinarily follow Christ *afar off*.

I am speaking, be it remembered, not of *all* Christians, but only of those whose hearts are but *half* for God. Every Christian professor whose conscience assures him that he belongs to this number I address with affectionate but earnest remonstrance. Oh, my brethren, why is this? Why consent to hinder the gospel of Christ? Why contract the guilt which this must of course involve? Why not rather cherish for the Saviour's cause a love so intense that it shall be ever a controlling motive, leading you to maintain a close fellowship with him?

4. Consider again as an index of your guilt, that while bent to backsliding you cannot be depended on in religion. You are not reliable persons. Christ cannot rely upon you. The Church cannot. Bound to the Saviour by an everlasting indenture, by a covenant which has received your own voluntary assent, it is yet impossible for him to depend upon you. You prove recreant to duty. He bids you go work in his vineyard. The reply is, "I go sir," but you go not, certainly not according to the spirit and extent of his command.

He bids you deny *all* ungodliness, be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; he bids you while not slothful in business to be fervent in spirit, to pray without ceasing—have your conversation in heaven—die unto sin daily—take up your cross and



bear it after him—in a word, to be like strangers and pilgrims here, seeking another and a *better* country, even a heavenly.

So far as the terms of profession go, you meet his demands. You covenant to do all these things, adorning the gospel rather than hindering it—doing good as you have opportunity rather than by your example doing evil. In this course you covenant to persevere to the end. On the strength of these vows—if I may so say—the Saviour entrusts in your hands the prospects and interests of his kingdom. He seems to retire personally to the throne of heaven as though he might safely commit these interests, however vast, to such fair-promising disciples.

But alas, when at the sixth or ninth hour he returns, what is the condition of that sacred cause? Where the sacred name, and honor, and interests of Christ? Down-trodden, neglected, the taunt of the scorner, clothed in sackcloth and desolate. And where are those its trustees, defenders, champions, boasted friends? Many are gone off to the world as a better portion, so mingled with the multitude in the scramble of life that we can no longer identify them, only that long time ago they subscribed their names to the Lord. And where are the dying sinners for whom on the cross mercy was provided, and whom the Redeemer would fain that Christians should have led to him for salvation. Where are they? Some have gone to the grave. Others are now ready to perish in their sins. All are unconcerned because they see Christians unconcerned. Yet they are on their way to the bar of God, speeding with rapid flight to their eternal doom. Some, Christian brethren, are already beyond your influence; others will be soon. Such is the condition in which the Master on returning finds his neglected cause.

What dependence is to be placed on servants like these? And what must be the guilt of perfidy in circumstances like these?

Verily, Christianity may exclaim in reference to many of its professed votaries, "*deliver me from my friends.*"

It cannot be that any true Christian seriously considers what he is doing when a backslider. I cannot therefore suppose that this flagrant sin is *wilfully* committed. Were it so, farewell their prospect of heaven. They would merit and receive the deepest place in hell. Yet a heart bent to blacksliding is altogether false to Christ, unreliable, and guilty to the extent I have described. Would to God, my brethren and friends, that the Holy Spirit might set our sins in order before our minds, and that a conviction of personal guilt might lead us to repent and do our first works!

III. It remains for me to speak of the *consequences of continuing in this guilty course*. There are two rods in the hand of God for offenders, the rod of *discipline* and the rod of *retribution*. The former is to correct, with a view to reclaim the offender. The latter is to punish the incorrigible, with a view to vindicate



and maintain his outraged authority. With the rod of discipline, come oftentimes desolation, rebuke, discomfort, darkness and barrenness, in spiritual experience. Should these various bitter experiences sent to the soul, or the Church, by way of fatherly discipline, fail of recalling the backsliders—should they yet pursue the world, deaf to the voice of love, alluring them back to God—deaf also to the voice of his authority, and to that of his providence, loudly rebuking their perfidy, I can see but one alternative. According to the principles of the Bible they must perish as *incorrigible*, just as if they had never professed religion. To bear the name of a Christian, cannot carry with it the virtue to save a soul. Not the *name* but the *thing*, the vitality, the real essence is essential. Accordingly, I see not why, if admonition, promise, threatening and all disciplinary influences which the Saviour may employ, fail to recover those who are *bent to backsliding*, they must not suffer the full penalty of unrepented, unpardoned sin.

1. The first appliances, however, which God will use are disciplinary. And the first consequence to be apprehended by a backslider, whether an individual or a Church, is *outward rebuke*. How often has God crossed the path of a Christian's worldliness, or of a Church in its declension! What signal rebuke he has administered! With the individual how many times has he dried up the streams of idolized accumulation!—permitted his store, his workshop, his dwelling to be consumed with flames, his ships to be engulfed in the waves, his harvest fields to be blighted. How many times has affliction uttered God's rebuke! sickness, prolonged, it may be, and painful, in his person or family, has admonished him. And how many times has it proved, that nothing would avail till death took the first-born, and it was over the narrow grave of a loved one that the first tears of repentance fell, the first resolution to be entirely devoted to the Saviour was formed, and the first steps of the backslider's return taken.

In like manner has it been with churches in their general declension. Their candlestick has been removed out of its place. The fire of devotion has gone out on their altars. Israel of old illustrates this. The Seven Churches of Asia are seven illustrations, and so too many churches at the present day, which have a name to live, but are dead.

2. Another consequence, is the *discomfort of the forsaken soul*; its restless condition, the possibly deep gloom which may settle down like night upon it. It must be unhappy when are withdrawn, with a grieved departing Saviour, the sweet influences of his grace, as well as the joyful assurance of blessedness hereafter.

The power of faith to uplift the soul, and fortify it against numberless depressing influences, is certainly not one of the least of the blessings of Christianity. Its power to irradiate the future with the *soft, calm* light of Hope, and to blunt the thorns of our

pathway to the tomb—this is not one of the least of its blessings. It is not a blessing to be despised. It must not be thrown away. And yet whoever is bent to backsliding from God, throws it away. I may, on this point, appeal to your own consciousness. Leaving a Saviour, do you not, fellow Christian, also leave Christian enjoyment? Do you not leave the inspiring, buoyant influence of Hope? Even so. And what is the equivalent? Nay, rather let me ask what is the *compensation*? Alas, what is it? Darkness in the soul, and leanness, doubts, fears, compunction the goads of conscience. The soul is no longer like a watered garden, but is a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. The burdens of life become more oppressive, while yet there are no everlasting arms underneath.

You, whose experience may have taught you how evil a thing it is, and bitter, to depart from Christ, may well inquire—

"Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and his word?  
What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But now I find an aching void  
The world can never fill."

3. The last consequence which I have time to mention, relates to the *future world*. It takes hold of retribution. It is this, that unless you repent and do your first works, you must perish. There is no talismanic charm about the *name* of Christian, or about a *profession* of religion which can rescue the hopeless backslider. He must lie down like other sinners, under the wrath of God. Yes, beloved hearer, whoever among you are bent to backsliding from God, if you repent not, you cannot enter heaven. Think, then, of the possibility, after all, of your perishing—of the certainty of it, unless you repent. Nor is this all.

Connected with this consequence to yourselves, are melancholy consequences to the unconverted in your families, and in the community. How seldom a sinner repenteth, while the Church is far from God! How seldom!

What will then become of your impenitent children—of these beloved youth, these young men and young women, that love not the Lord Jesus Christ? What will become of these unconverted husbands and wives, *fathers* and *mothers*, who are not even thoughtful about their souls, and who *will* not be, until the backsliding of the Church is healed?

Indeed, it would seem that on the decision you make, relative to returning to God, hinges the salvation, not only of your *own* souls, but that of your dearest relatives and neighbors. It has well been said, that you are touching chords which will send their vibrations through eternity—holding, as it were, the heart-strings, not of the temporal life of *one* individual, but the immor-

talities of many. Ponder this well. It will constitute, be assured, food of abundant reflection in another world.

And now, in closing, one word to my fellow sinners. In this discourse have been exhibited some of the marks by which to identify those who are bent to backsliding from God—the *guilt* of their condition and conduct, as also the *consequences* of it which prompt repentance can alone avert; *consequences* to themselves personally, to their families, to the churches composed of them, and indirectly to *you*, inasmuch as your future turns, to a great extent, upon the fidelity or perfidy of the Church.

Now, has it not occurred to you to ask what your character is in the sight of a holy God—what your *guilt* is, and what your future must be, unless you escape to the Lord Jesus Christ? If even Christian people fall into such guilt, so displease Jehovah, and bring wrath upon themselves, how must it be with you, who are not, like them, restrained by any attachment to the Saviour's person or cause, nor by any solemn vows of consecration, nor by any peculiar influences of guarding grace? What a burden of guilt is yours were God to lay it now open upon your dormant conscience? What a prospect too for eternity? If God has so much against professing Christians, for their worldliness, what must he have against you? And if they will scarcely be saved—nay, if some of them will be disappointed in the final day, where will *you* appear?

It is not indeed alleged against you that you are bent on backsliding. No. For you have never at all consecrated your hearts to God. But the allegation in your case is, that you permit your hearts to be *full of evil, only evil, and that continually*. Alas, how can you stand in the Judgment? Not having devoted to your Saviour the least confidence, or affection,—no gratitude, no cheerful service, having lived solely for yourselves, repelling every felt obligation, admitting practically no allegiance to heaven, how can you endure to fall into the hands of an angry God?

Consider well this solemn inquiry, "*If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*" Yes; if the Redeemer, if holy angels, and their own consciences too, condemn Christians for withholding a *portion* only of their hearts from Christ, where will you appear who are altogether devoted to *self and sin*?

## SERMON DCIX.

BY REV. G. A. CALHOUN, D. D.,

NORTH COVENTRY, CT.

## ADVANTAGES OF GOD'S GRACIOUS PRESENCE.

"And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them."—Ex. xxv. 8.

Were you to destroy your bibles, demolish your sanctuary, make common the Sabbath, close the lips of the preacher, and cause the voice of prayer no more to be heard; you would occasion a great diminution of present enjoyment. There are not a few, who take pleasure in reading the Bible. There are those who hail with joy the approaching Sabbath; there are those who esteem it a blessed privilege to enter the courts of the Lord; there are those, who would deeply regret a denial of the rites of baptism, and the Lord's Supper; and there are those, who would hang their harps upon the willows, and mourn in bitterness, were they refused the privilege of prayer.

We see a company assembling for public worship, with anticipations of much satisfaction in the transactions before them. During the services of the occasion, we observe a fixed attention, a glow of animation, an expression of joy excited by the presence of God. The assembly is dismissed, and many of them retire, having had a feast more satisfactory to them, than that of "a stalled ox." Look at that man, who seldom, if ever, enters the house of God; has he enjoyment like this?

We hear Christian friends in conversation. Now their theme is the perfections of Jehovah; and admiration and joy swell their breasts. Now redeeming grace is their topic, and how mild and placid their countenances. Now they speak of the progress of the Gospel—the increase of the faithful—the success attending the cause of benevolence—and the final triumph of the cause of Christ; and how elevated and celestial their feelings. Look at that man, who disregards religious institutions; has he comforts like these?

We now silently approach a dwelling. It is the dwelling of the pious. As we are about to tread the threshold, the voice of prayer greets our ears. The father, and mother, and children, around their family altar, are on their knees before God. The fire of love is kindled in their breasts. The God of love is spe-

cially present. Their faces shine while they boldly intercede, that they may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Look at that irreligious father, who spurns at the duty of family devotion ; has his household peace and comfort like this ?

To-day we meet a pious father. As he affectionately takes our hand, tears of joy flow from eyes unaccustomed to weep. What causes this overflowing of heart ? Oh, his long lost child,—the child of his hopes, the child of his prayers, and the child of his tears,—is found. And found by him who came to seek and save that which is lost. Has the ungodly father joy like this ?

We now walk in secret places, and what objects are these which we behold ? Yonder is an aged pilgrim, wearied with the calls of the world, and the noise of her companions to the grave who has retired with her Bible to enjoy a season of undisturbed communion with God. Oh, how refreshing, how sweet to her taste this communion with her heavenly Father ! Yonder, too, is a youth, who has recently been adopted into the family of God. He is presenting his thank-offering for converting grace, and pleading at the throne of mercy for his companions in sin. In the attitude of supplication, he lingers and pleads, and lingers and pleads. His lips break their silence. We hear him saying, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me"—except thou convert and save my companions. Look at those, who scoff at the religion of the cross ; are they found in places so sacred, and in employments so delightful, so heavenly as these ?

We now visit houses of affliction. Entering one, we find a man of forty-five. A short time since he was the picture of health. This man did not pray in his family. He did not frequent the house of God. To the sacredness of the Sabbath he paid but little attention. And for the support of religious institutions he made no sacrifices. Disease has grasped the springs of life, and in full strength he is writhing and groaning with tortures of body ; and this is not all which renders the sight appalling. He is now brought to see himself in the hands of death, unprepared for the retributions of eternity. He entreats us to instruct him, and pray for him. And with a countenance terrific, a soul filled with anguish, and the darkness of despair gathering around him, his cries for pardon and salvation are incessant, until death closes the scene, and there is a great and awful silence. Well did wicked Balaam say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

But as afflictions are not confined to the families of the ungodly, we will enter another dwelling. Here we find an emaciated body, worn out with disease and distress. This person is a female, a tender plant, which has been watched, and nourished, with all the attention and solicitude of a fond mother's care ; but the rough winds, and violent storms of death, are now beating upon her. Her eyes are sunk, her bosom heaves, her lips quiver—all, all bespeak the presence of the king of terrors.



And yet there is a meekness in her aspect, like the love of Jesus—there is a calmness, like a summer's evening—there is the stillness of peace—the softness of quietude—and the joy of bright prospects. We ask her, whence this triumph in death? She replies, God is dwelling with me; in him do I triumph. We ask her mother, who stands gazing on her dying child, how can you be so calm and cheerful in this heart-rending hour? She replies, God is dwelling with me—in his will do I rejoice. Tell me, oh, tell me, my hearers, did you ever witness a scene so affecting, so comforting, and so heavenly, in the dwellings of those, who neglect the institutions of our holy religion?

Religion, in the life that now is, presents its hundred-fold reward. And were all beyond the grave but an empty void; were death, when it dissolves the body, to annihilate the soul; we could not do too much in rearing a Sanctuary, that we might secure the presence of God among us.

We should not, however, omit to contemplate, for a moment, the benefits resulting from God's dwelling with a people, which they will experience in *the world to come*.

Life is a vapor, and time is but a narrow isthmus, separating eternity past from eternity future. Whatever are the blessings of God's special presence experienced in this world, compared with those to be experienced in the world of spirits, they are a drop to the ocean, an atom to the universe. Persons must rear a sanctuary, and thus secure the dwelling of God with them in this life, or they cannot dwell with him in the life to come. "And holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." It is a privilege of those who attend on the means of grace with a cordial reliance on Christ for pardon and acceptance, to be delivered from a woe indescribable, a woe eternal—from the worm which never dieth, and from the fire which is never quenched. It is also their privilege to be like Christ, to be with Christ, to behold his glory, to taste of his love, and drink of the river of pleasure which issues from his throne forever and ever. Brethren, were there no present advantages derived from serving God—were our attempts to serve him attended with toil, disappointment and sorrow, with no one emotion of joy—were the wicked to be the people of prosperity, of undisturbed peace, and unalloyed comfort in this world; and were the righteous, as was their Saviour, to be forsaken in death: when faith presents us a vision of the miseries of the damned, and of the glories of the redeemed, we are prepared to say, Let us live the life, and die the death of the righteous, and let our last end be like his.